

INTERNATIONAL CONCILIATION

Published monthly by the
American Association for International Conciliation.
Entered as second class matter at New York, N. Y.,
Postoffice, February 23, 1909, under act of July 16, 1894

MUSIC AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE



BY

DANIEL GREGORY MASON

Assistant Professor of Music in Columbia University

JUNE, 1913, No. 67

American Association for International Conciliation

Sub-station 84 (407 West 117th Street)

New York City

The Executive Committee of the Association for International Conciliation wish to arouse the interest of the American people in the progress of the movement for promoting international peace and relations of comity and good fellowship between nations. To this end they print and circulate documents giving information as to the progress of these movements, in order that individual citizens, the newspaper press, and organizations of various kinds may have readily available accurate information on these subjects. A list of publications will be found on page 15.

Daniel Gregory Mason was born at Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1873. He graduated from Harvard in 1895, and studied music in Boston, New York and Paris. In addition to his professorship at Columbia University he lectures at the American Institute of Applied Music and at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. Professor Mason is the author of several books on musical subjects and has composed songs, piano pieces, and chamber music.

MUSIC AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

THERE is a Russian edition of Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Scheherazade," a suite of pieces for orchestra founded on the Arabian Nights Entertainments, which flaunts as title-page a most gorgeously oriental design of bright blues, reds and greens, on a background of gold. It is strikingly handsome and quite barbaric, reminding one more than anything else of the wall decorations of Byzantine architecture. And the last touch of outlandishness is given by the text in those strange Russian letters which look, according to a whimsical friend of mine, "as English does when you have belladonna in your eyes." To see discerningly such a title-page, feeling the remoteness of the point of view that produced it from that of the Anglo-Saxon mind, and then to turn over the leaf and read, with a thrill of appreciation, the stirring melody with which the piece begins, is to gain a vivid sense of the universality of music, its power to bridge even such a chasm as that which separates East and West. A Russian and an American who stopped at the title-page might well feel a strangeness in each other, a sense of fundamental differences in racial

memories, traditions, tastes, which would need only an occasion to manifest itself in active enmity; yet if they once heard the music, witnessing each other's delight in it, they would feel underneath all this a bond of common human feeling uniting them already in potential friendship. However little sympathy they might have in other respects, the music at least would speak to both, by virtue of its unique power as the only language that requires no translation.

MUSIC UNDERSTOOD EVERYWHERE.

This curious power of music to reconcile extremes by means of its universal comprehensibility seems to me to constitute a strong claim on the attention of those interested in international friendship and the cessation of wars which it alone can bring. If it be true that music is, in sober fact, the only international language, the only emotional and spiritual coinage that is honored all over the world, then it must surely be an invaluable influence toward peace. For after all, the acts of governments are ultimately dependent on the temper of the people behind them. If the mass of the people in a country are selfish, provincial and narrow, inclined to look upon all the world beyond their borders as "outlandish" and "queer," as made up of those infra-human beings called "foreigners," then that country is never really safe from war. And it is only when the mass of people are educated beyond

such crude sophomoric views and learn to substitute for the conception of "foreigner" that of "interestingly different fellow being," that there is any real basis, in mutual regard, for a lasting peace.

THE PLASTIC ARTS AS PEACE INFLUENCES.

In developing such a mutual understanding and regard between nations, the arts have important but varying functions to perform. The plastic arts, by nature more objective than the arts of literature and music, may be of great service in familiarizing us with the external aspects of distant countries, and thus making us feel at home there. In the wholly strange we notice only trifling details, as one unacquainted with Brittany and Normandy, for example, might, on first seeing a picture by Millet, pay more attention to the wooden shoes and the smocks of the peasants than to the physical and mental characteristics which he delineates so wonderfully. By familiarizing us with French peasant life such a painter as Millet does much to supersede such childish preoccupations in us by more helpful divinations as to the human nature living its serious life beneath these clothes.

LITERATURE AND MUSIC ACT MORE DIRECTLY.

Literature and music, however, by virtue of their more intimate, subjective way of working, exercise an even more important influence, perhaps, toward inter-

national goodfellowship. They are not obliged to go indirectly at the spirit through the body, but are privileged to express directly and poignantly the most intimate facts of mental and emotional life. A Russian painter may give us pictures under the surface of which we can discern much of what makes the Russian character individual; but Turgenev in his novels and Tschaïkowsky in his symphonies show us the Russian as he is in his soul—that strange mixture of fatalism and impulsiveness. Constable shows us the English countryside, and Gainsborough and Hogarth, in their differing ways, it must be admitted, show us much of the English character; but not quite in the simple transparency wherewith it is revealed in a poem like “Robin Hood” or a folk-song like “Polly Oliver.”

Literature, of course, whether in the poem, the novel, or the play, is one of the great revealers, the influence of which toward a good understanding between nations it would be hard to overestimate. Yet even over literature music has one advantage, which dates back to the confusion of tongues. The work of art in words must be translated if it is to make its appeal beyond its limited audience; the work of art in tones appeals to every human being in the measure of his capacity to hear, and to understand intelligently what he hears. Moreover, the habit of reading is confined to certain classes; some people who never open a book listen with ardor and a certain degree of intelligence to music;

it is quite conceivable, for example, that one who had never heard of Turgenev, might nevertheless feel powerfully the spell of Russia in such a work as Tschaïkowsky's "Pathetic Symphony," or that one wholly unacquainted with the history of serfdom might have a ray of sympathy for the monotonous weariness of the serf's existence shot into his heart by hearing the "Song of the Volga Boatmen." Probably for every ten Americans who have gained a sense of sympathy with Germany through Goethe's or Heine's poetry there are a dozen who love Beethoven's music. Few except special students could give an intelligent account of a great literary masterpiece of an out-of-the-way country like the Norwegian Ibsen's "Peer Gynt"; how many have delighted in the melodious orchestral suite founded upon it by Grieg!

MUSIC GOES THE DEEPER.

It would of course be absurd to claim that music can give us anything like the detailed information that literature can, or that its message is at all comparable to that of literature in concreteness and definiteness. In any such comparison music must suffer. So far as international peace depends upon the communication of facts and concrete thoughts from nation to nation, literature is doubtless its chief servant. But the present point is that it depends not only on these, but also, and perhaps even more intimately, on profound tem-

peramental affinities and sympathies that can best be nurtured by such an art as music, with its wonderful power of illuminating the depths of our emotional life. It cannot show us the other man's intellectual ideas; but if, by way of compensation for this shortcoming of vagueness, it has an incomparable power to reveal what is even deeper, his loves and hates, his hopes and fears, in a word the temperamental soil out of which all his ideas must grow, is not that an even more vital revelation? Music thus seems to bring us into contact at a deeper level than that of the spoken word.

FOLK MUSIC.

If music as a whole is thus distinguished from other modes of expression by the depth of the emotional level to which it penetrates, it is also noteworthy that within music itself there are different levels of expression, some kinds of music delving much more profoundly into human nature, others remaining comparatively superficial. To this latter class I should be inclined to attribute those compositions based on folk-music which have played so prominent a part in the musical history of the nineteenth century. Many composers of this period discovered in the provincial music of various countries a charm which was due to its quaintness, its novelty, its unfamiliarity to the cosmopolitan ear. It was a charm akin to that which the American traveler finds in Dutch windmills or Egyp-

tian camels—the charm of the picturesque, of “local color.” The peculiarities enjoyed were in every case more or less external, superficial; yet the enjoyment of them, so far as it went, tended to increase the interest in other nations, and perhaps even the sense of brotherhood with them.

SOME EXAMPLES.

Examples of this interest in provincial peculiarities, in what may be called dialects of the musical language, meet us on every hand in nineteenth century composition. Recent research proves that even Haydn, at the end of the previous century, based his work largely on Croatian folk-songs. Beethoven used one or two Turkish themes, in somewhat jesting mood, but it is not until Liszt borrowed so copiously from his native Hungarian melodies that we find the practice well established. Chopin used the Polish folk-music to a limited extent. Grieg, the first thorough-going “nationalist,” owes much of his charm to the plaintive Norwegian idiom; Dvořák and Smetana exploited Bohemia with equal success; Russia had its Glinka, Balakirev, Cui and others, Poland its Paderewski, Finland its Sibelius; our own countryman MacDowell has used in his Indian Suite the tunes of the red aborigines of America, and Dvořák, Chadwick, Gilbert, and others have idealized the really beautiful plantation airs of the negroes.

In all national music of this kind, strictly so called, we find a strong local interest. Over and above the general appeal of the music as music, which is sometimes considerable, there is the special interest of the reflection of a particular racial or national temper, often inextricably intertwined with the interest of technical peculiarities of a highly local kind. Emotionally such music interests us not so much through its expression of widespread or universal human feelings as through its emphasis on subtle shades or unusual accentuation, such as the touch of southern languor in Italian love-songs, or the riotous wealth of imagination revealed by the ornamental cadenzas of the Hungarian gypsy. Technically it is notable not so much for high organization or beauty of design—universal qualities—as for the quaintness of some peculiarity, either rhythmic, as in the “Scotch snap,” familiar to us in our own “ragtime,” or melodic, as in the tendency of the Norwegian tunes to fall back from the seventh step of the scale to the fifth instead of proceeding to the eighth, and the like. In a word, it is the excessive rather than the normal that appeals to us in all these cases.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS CANNOT MISREPRESENT.

This distinction is made not invidiously but for clearness of classification and discussion. Provincially national music amply justifies itself, from many points of

view. Especially interesting to us here is the service it does to international goodfellowship by presenting to us the peculiarities of distant nations in piquant and attractive guise. We hear, for instance, the Slavonic Dances of Dvořák with their impetuous rhythms, their gracefully twining and climbing melodies, their intoxication of joy in dancing, and we understand something of the passionate delight in rhythmic movement that is said sometimes to keep the Bohemian peasants dancing all night. Or we divine in the "spirituals" of the negroes, at once palpitantly sensuous and charged with awe-struck, childlike piety, something of the paradox of their strangely mixed emotional nature. And it is worth noting that folk-music, emanating as it does from man's subconscious life, cannot misrepresent him as his conscious expressions sometimes do. We are frequently told that the French are frivolous, or worse; but we cannot hear such a tune as their "*Nous n'irons plus au bois*" without doing homage to their chivalrous gaiety of spirit. The German devotion to the Fatherland becomes sometimes, in its verbal utterance, the least bit wearying; the solidity of character, the stout unquestioning loyalty of heart which underlies it, finds a far more ingratiating expression in those massively plain old German chorales which did so much to inspire the "father of musicians," J. S. Bach.

COSMOPOLITAN MUSIC AN EVEN HIGHER TYPE.

Music does much, then, to interpret nations to each other by seizing upon and presenting persuasively the salient, individualizing traits of each. But perhaps it does even more by giving noble and universally intelligible expression to the human qualities common to all. Was not Tschäikowsky right when, instead of joining the nationalists, Balakirev, Cui, and the rest, who were exploiting the Russian folk-music to the exclusion of all else, he set himself to study the best music of the world, and to acquire an eclectic and cosmopolitan style? Is there not something inspiring in the breadth of view suggested by his answer to a lady who asked him what was his ideal?—"My ideal," he replied, "is to write beautiful music." Beauty in music, he doubtless realized, was something far wider than this or that piquant cadence or turn of melody; it was the result of a divination that plumbed deeper than the national peculiarities; it was not Russian, but human. Had he not thus felt that what we may call the international sense of music was even more precious than its national interpretation he could hardly have stirred, as he has done, music-lovers all over the world.

It has often been pointed out that the greatest poets speak to the widest audience, that Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante are understood in some measure by all men, and that what they say is so universal that we

are apt to forget which is English, which German, and which Italian. The same thing is true, I think, of the greatest composers: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms, happen all to be German, it is true; but that seems rather accidental than essential to their quality. And in our own day, when intercommunication has so reduced the insulating power of space, it is surely a world-language that is spoken (with varying accents, of course) by such men as Strauss in Germany, d'Indy in France, Elgar in England, Rachmaninoff in Russia, and that is understood by intelligent music-lovers the world over.

PETTY RIVALRIES SURMOUNTED IN IDEAL REALMS.

Such a cosmopolitanism in so highly ideal and disinterested a pursuit as music seems to me to be as advantageous to the interests of peace as it is to those of art. Since international jealousies are likely to keep a certain degree of bitterness so long as they center on material objects which cannot be divided, it is most fortunate that they can sometimes be transformed into freer, more generous rivalries, taking place in those mental and spiritual arenas where possessions are increased by being shared. We may admire, but we are apt to envy, a person or a nation that outstrips us in the race for physical wealth, but in these more ethereal realms the work is undertaken in common, and the success of one is the success of all. If it be true that

competition is the law only so long as values are conceived as personal, then it is nowhere more likely to be superseded by a more magnanimous coöperation and community of effort than in those fields where the good sought is so universal in its nature, like artistic insight, that it cannot be conceived as anything but impersonal and free to all.

DANIEL GREGORY MASON.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Nos. 1-54, inclusive (April, 1907, to May, 1912). Including papers by Baron d'Estournelles de Constant, George Trumbull Ladd, Elihu Root, Barrett Wendell, Charles E. Jefferson, Seth Low, William James, Andrew Carnegie, Philander C. Knox, Pope Pius X, Heinrich Lammasch, Norman Angell, and others. A list of titles and authors will be sent on application.

55. The International Mind. Opening Address at the Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration, by Nicholas Murray Butler, June, 1912.

56. The Irrationality of War. On Science as an Element in the Developing of International Good Will and Understanding, by Sir Oliver Lodge, July, 1912.

57. The Interest of the Wage-earner in the Present Status of the Peace Movement; Address Delivered at the Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration, by Charles Patrick Neill, August, 1912.

58. The Relation of Social Theory to Public Policy, by Franklin H. Giddings, September, 1912.

59. The Double Standard in Regard to Fighting, by George M. Stratton, October, 1912.

60. As to Two Battleships. Contributions to the Debate upon the Naval Appropriation Bill in the House of Representatives, November, 1912.

61. The Cosmopolitan Club Movement, by Louis P. Lochner, December, 1912.

62. The Spirit of Self-Government; Address Delivered at the 144th Anniversary Banquet of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, by Elihu Root, January, 1913.

63. The Time to Test Our Faith in Arbitration, by William Howard Taft, and Should the Panama Canal Tolls Controversy be Arbitrated? by Amos S. Hershey, February, 1913.

Special Bulletin: Who Makes War? From the London Times, February, 1913.

64. Internationalism; A Selected List of Books, Pamphlets and Periodicals, by Frederick C. Hicks, March, 1913.

65. The Interparliamentary Union, by Christian L. Lange, April, 1913.

Special Bulletin: On Naval Armaments. From his Speech on the Naval Estimate in the House of Commons, by Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, April, 1913.

66. The Opportunity and Duty of the Press in Relation to World Peace, by William C. Deming, May, 1913.

67. Music as an International Language, by Daniel Gregory Mason, June, 1913.

Up to the limit of the editions printed, any one of the above will be sent postpaid upon receipt of a request addressed to the Secretary of the American Association for International Conciliation, Postoffice Sub-station 84, New York, N. Y.

A small edition of a monthly bibliography of articles having to do with international matters is also published and distributed to libraries, magazines, and newspapers.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER

RICHARD BARTHOLDT

LYMAN ABBOTT

JAMES SPEYER

STEPHEN HENRY OLIN

SETH LOW

ROBERT A. FRANKS

GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

ROBERT BACON

COUNCIL OF DIRECTION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL CONCILIATION

LYMAN ABBOTT, NEW YORK.
 CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, BOSTON.
 EDWIN A. ALDERMAN, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.
 ROBERT BACON, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
 RICHARD BARTHOLDT, ST. LOUIS, MO.
 GEORGE BLUMENTHAL, NEW YORK.
 CLIFTON R. BRECKENRIDGE, FORT SMITH,
 ARKANSAS.
 WILLIAM J. BRYAN, LINCOLN, NEB.
 T. E. BURTON, CLEVELAND, OHIO.
 NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER, NEW YORK.
 ANDREW CARNEGIE, NEW YORK.
 EDWARD CARY, NEW YORK.
 JOSEPH H. CHOATE, NEW YORK.
 RICHARD H. DANA, BOSTON, MASS.
 ARTHUR L. DASHER, MACON, GA.
 HORACE E. DEMING, NEW YORK.
 CHARLES W. ELIOT, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
 JOHN W. FOSTER, WASHINGTON, D. C.
 ROBERT A. FRANKS, ORANGE, N. J.
 ROBERT GARRETT, BALTIMORE, MD.
 JOHN ARTHUR GREENE, NEW YORK.
 JAMES M. GREENWOOD, KANSAS CITY, MO.
 FRANKLIN H. HEAD, CHICAGO, ILL.
 WILLIAM J. HOLLAND, PITTSBURGH, PA.
 HAMILTON HOLT, NEW YORK.
 DAVID STARR JORDAN, STANFORD UNIVERSITY,
 CAL.
 J. H. KIRKLAND, NASHVILLE, TENN.
 ADOLPH LEWISOHN, NEW YORK.
 SETH LOW, NEW YORK.

CLARENCE H. MACKAY, NEW YORK.
 THEODORE MARBURG, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM.
 BRANDER MATTHEWS, NEW YORK.
 SILAS MCBEE, NEW YORK.
 GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, PRINCETON, N. J.
 ANDREW J. MONTAGUE, RICHMOND, VA.
 W. W. MORROW, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
 LEVI P. MORTON, NEW YORK.
 STEPHEN H. OLIN, NEW YORK.
 HENRY S. PRITCHETT, NEW YORK.
 A. V. V. RAYMOND, BUFFALO, N. Y.
 IRA REMSEN, BALTIMORE, MD.
 JAMES FORD RHODES, BOSTON, MASS.
 HOWARD J. ROGERS, ALBANY, N. Y.
 ELIHU ROOT, WASHINGTON, D. C.
 J. G. SCHURMAN, ITHACA, N. Y.
 JAMES BROWN SCOTT, WASHINGTON, D. C.
 ISAAC N. SELIGMAN, NEW YORK.
 F. J. V. SKIFF, CHICAGO, ILL.
 WILLIAM M. SLOANE, NEW YORK.
 JAMES SPEYER, NEW YORK.
 OSCAR S. STRAUS, NEW YORK.
 MRS. MARY WOOD SWIFT, BERKELEY, CAL.
 GEORGE W. TAYLOR, DEMOPOLIS, ALA.
 O. H. TITTMAN, WASHINGTON, D. C.
 W. H. TOLMAN, NEW YORK.
 CHARLEMAGNE TOWER, PHILADELPHIA, PA.
 BENJAMIN F. TRUEBLOOD, WASHINGTON, D. C.
 EDWARD TUCK, PARIS, FRANCE.
 GEORGE E. VINCENT, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.
 WILLIAM D. WHEELWRIGHT, PORTLAND, ORE.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER
 RICHARD BARTHOLDT
 LYMAN ABBOTT
 JAMES SPEYER

STEPHEN HENRY OLIN
 SETH LOW
 ROBERT A. FRANKS
 GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

ROBERT BACON

Secretary

FREDERICK P. KEPPEL

Assistant Secretary for the Southern States
 DUNBAR ROWLAND

CONCILIATION INTERNATIONALE

78 BIS AVENUE HENRI MARTIN, PARIS XVI^e, FRANCE

President Fondateur, BARON D'ESTOURNELLES DE CONSTANT

Member Hague Court, Senator

Honorary Presidents: BERTHELOT and LEON BOURGEOIS, Senators

Secretaries General: A. METIN and JULES RAIS

Treasurer: ALBERT KAHN

VERBAND FÜR INTERNATIONALE VERSTÄNDIGUNG

Presidents

GEHEIMER RAT PROFESSOR DR. EMANUEL RITTER VON ULLMANN, Munich PROFESSOR DR. OTFRIED NIPPOLD, Oberursel am Taunus	PROFESSOR DR. WALTHER SCHÜCKING, Marburg a.L.
--	--

Vice-Presidents

PROFESSOR DR. ROBERT PILOTY, Würzburg.	BANKDIREKTOR HERMANN MAIER, Schatzmeister, Frankfurt a.M.
---	--